

Women Identity and Self-Assertion: A Study of Two Contemporary Retellings of Mahabharata

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DECLARATION

I, hereby declare that I have completed my final year project “**Women Identity and Self Assertion: A study of two Contemporary Retellings of Mahabharata**” at National Institute of Technology Rourkela, Odisha in the academic year 2015 under the supervision of Prof. V. Vamshi Krishna Reddy. The information submitted by me here is true and original to the best of my knowledge.

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This is to certify that the dissertation entitled, “Women Identity and Self Assertion: A study of two contemporary retellings of Mahabharata” submitted by Suchi Smita Mishra for the partial fulfilment of the Master degree in Development Studies from the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, National Institute of Technology, Rourkela, is an authentic work carried out by her under my supervision. To the best of my knowledge, the matter embodied in the dissertation has not been submitted to any other university/ institute for the award of any degree or diploma.

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ABSTRACT

Mythology has been very foundation of many cultures and civilizations. The western world has inherited the base from the classical mythology of Greek and Roman civilization but for India this is all about the rich heritage of its own mythology which is culturally and religiously much more vibrant. In this project, the retellings, refolding and revisiting of mythology has been greatly emphasized which shows the especially perspective of women. It is also describing the changing role of women in our society. The two major epics that hugely influenced the Indian culture are the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, for this paper I found the Mahabharata interesting and convincing. This study will analyse how the female perception differs from the male discourse especially by contrasting the myths from the Mahabharata. Indian feminist begun to step out from the shadow and rewrote mythology, which was written by Man. This was necessary because male discourse elides women. Men written myths have the functions to infantilize women, to irradiate the dysfunction women have to write for themselves in discourse. From these retelling of mythology I have taken two of the novels for my study i.e. *“The Palace of Illusions”* by Chitra Banarjee Divakaruni and *“Karna’s wife: the Outcast Queen”* by Kavita Kane. The objective of the study is to contemporizing the past and bringing mythical era to the present. The second objective is to blurring the line between the past and mythology for this 21st century society.

CHAPTER-I

1. INTRODUCTION

Every culture has its own myth those service the society to recognize its customs and ways of viewing the world. Mythologies generally are long descriptions about legendary or historical heroes, written in a grand style, where god, spirit, or soul appears in an earthly form. About 1500

B. C., people from the North-west of India began migrating to the north and central part of India, and they are called Aryans or Indo-Europeans¹

They started mythical practices that became the foundation of a primary form of Hinduism. Over the years, Aryans mingled with the people and with the cultures of the Indian subcontinent and the mythology became more complex. There are different stages introduced to the concept of Hinduism, which can be accompanying to the most important texts enduring from each period.

Vedas are joined with the beginning phases of the most established Indian archives. One of them, the *Rig-Veda*, is a gathering of 1,028 hymns² with references to myths. The antiquated Aryan's custom considers *the Vedas* that were imparted verbally. The following gathering of a transcript, the *Brahmanas*, dated from 900 to 700 B. C. Despite the fact that worry is principally with the customs of Hinduism, the *Brahmanas* contain numerous myths. *The Upanishads* has been composed around 700 B. C. what more frequently conveys through the myths i.e. the two extraordinary Hindu epic³, *the Mahabharata* and *the Ramayana*, recorded at some point between 300 B. C. and 300 A. D., contain stories about various deity⁴. Consequently, the real appearance of Hindu mythology and religion was in writings called *Puranas*, "*Stories of the Old Days*." Here the greater part of the stories is dedicated to some god. Hindu legends are possessed by a monstrous shed of divinities, evil presences, demigods⁵, people, and creatures.

The *Mahabharata* regularly retells previous myths; in some cases it talks of the Gods themselves. One of these is the real trick of rebirth, infrequently called the transmigration of souls. In Hindu conviction, each and every spirit is fit for some lives. After the decay of one body, or on re-incarnation, the spirit is conceived by another living body. Indeed, even the divine

¹ According to the essay by Frawely entitled "The myth of the Aryan Invasion of India" the Indo-European or the Aryans came to India by the 100 to 1500 B.C. The Aryans built up the Indus valley civilization.

² Hymn- A song that is dedicated to praise or showing gratitude toward God

³ Epic- An extended narrative poem with ornate and dignified language to celebrate the protagonist's victory, glory and journey of life

⁴ Deity-The different form or Avatars of God and Goddess

⁵ Demigods- A earthly creature that is part God and part human.

beings can be breathed into the new life as human being on earth. Pretty much as the individual soul is constantly renewed, the universe is eternally created and destroyed. Time moves in arrangement of billions of years, perpetually building up and tearing down with no starting or end. All progressions and demolitions are the piece of a celestially coordinated blissful move that will in the long run bring about restoration. Confronted with this huge example, every individual has the obligation to take after his or her own particular example of right behaviour which is called the *Dharma*. The idea of legends and the portrayal of God and their incarnation on earth are regular to the Indian setting as well as confirmations are there where the Greek and Iranian societies additionally considered the sagas they could call their own. Case in point *Shahnameh* or *Shahnama* is an epic composed by the Persian artist Firdausi in the middle of the year c. 977 and 1010 CE is the world's longest sonnet⁶ composed by a solitary writer. Till date the epic has its esteem for the Persian society and for the devotees of Zoroastrian religion. Moreover the Greek individuals have their own particular legacy and society. Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are noticeable among the majority of the mythologies described in the Greek history. The rundown of certain Greek mythology is long, few of them are *The Myth of Sisyphus*, *The myth of Tantalus* is real in Greek Mythology, *The Myth of Pygmalion and Galatea*, *Odysseus* and *Cyclops*, *The Myth of Aphrodite* and *Adonis* are additionally critical among alternate mythologies.

Hindu fervour and mythology colours every aspect of life and values in India scenario. They are the foundation of uncountable works of art, for example the plays about *Ram* written the 700s to modern Indian movies based on mythical stories. Celebrations, for example, the ten-day harvest time (Festival of Dushahera) of Ram and his wife Sita keep the customary divine beings, legends, and myths alive. Indeed, even place names have been connected with the legendary gestures. The city of Calcutta, for instance, originates from Kalighat, the spot where self-abasement to the goddess Kali once occurred. Other than motivating eras of Indian specialists and scholars, Hindu mythology has claimed an excess in the West also. Ralph Waldo Emerson, an American author of the 1800s, composed *Brahma*, a lyric praising the inventor God. In the same period, the western world got to be acquainted with the legends of Savitri and

⁶ Sonnet- a verse fixed to the Italian origin consisting of 14 lines that are typically 5- foot iambics rhyming according to a prescribed scheme

Satyaban through Edwin Arnold's sonnet *Savitri*, or *Love and Death*. A sonnet by the German essayist Goethe called *The God and the Bayadere* (moving young lady) manages an appearance on earth of the god Shiva's Tandava Nritya. English director Gustav Holst composed a chamber of musical drama one intended to be sung, not acted; with a little symphony called *Savitri*, Holst additionally decoded numerous songs from the *Rig-Veda* into English and composed music to oblige them. These four arrangements of tunes are assembled together under the title *Choral Hymns*⁷. Bertram Shapleigh, an American director, composed *Vedic Hymn*⁸, additionally in view of content from the *Rig-Veda*, and a bit of symphonic music⁹ called *Ramayana*. A 1989 film of the *Mahabharata* composed by Jean-Claude Carrière and coordinated by Peter Brook has conveyed the antiquated epic to cutting edge motion picture crowds.

The two major epics where the culture, tradition and life Hinduism reflect are *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. These epics contain the large tales of heroes and their bravery; they tell about the powerful villains and their vices, they sing the charm and dedication of the queens and about their pitiful journeys as well.

1.1. RAMAYANA

The epic of the *Ramayana* is one of the most well-known epics in Hindu literature; the *Ramayana* tells the adventurous episodes of Ram, a legendary hero who is worshiped as God in many parts of India. *Ramayana* is probably written in the 200 B.C., the *Ramayana* is attributed to Valmiki, a man whose intelligence and higher ethics appears as characters in the work. Based on

⁷ Choral Hymns – the hymns usually sung by choir

⁸ Vedic hymns- hymns related to the Hindu culture and describe about the *Vedas*

⁹ Symphonic music- This is an extended musical composition for orchestra in several movements, for symphony among the composers especially known for their symphonies are Ludwig van Beethoven, Johannes Brahms, Franz Josef Haydn, Gustav Mahler, and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

numerous legends, the *Ramayana* additionally joins holy material from the Vedas, a progression of antiquated Hindu religious writings. According to the *Ramayana*, Ram was the seventh incarnation of the god Vishnu; Vishnu's heavenly powers were acquired by Ram, while his siblings imparted the rest. He was born as the eldest son of King Dasaratha of Ajodhya, he was conceived when Vishnu gave three of the king's wives a special potion to drink. There are numerous anecdotes¹⁰ inside the grand epic of *Ramayana* which are all about the heroic deeds of Ram and his three brothers. For example, during their initial phase of boyhood the story behind the slaughtering of Taraka is quite famous. Not long after the marriage of Ram and Sita, King Dasaratha chose to turn over his throne to Ram. In any case, his wife Kaikeyi, mother of Bharata, reminded Dasaratha that he had once guaranteed to give her two wishes. Reluctantly, the king allowed Kaikeyi her wishes to exile Ram and spot Bharata on the throne. The heroism also reflected there on the court of king Janaka where Ram successively broke the mighty bow of lord Shiva and owns the contest there in Sita's Swayamvar. Though *Ramayana* is full of valiant performances of Ram, it also encompasses the Journey of a woman from princess Janaki to queen Sita. *Ramayana* is not all about elucidation of Ram and Sita, here the heroism of three brothers; mostly Lakshmana's has also been highlighted. An unsung story also lies on the lap of *Ramayana* which is about Lakshmana's wife Urmila. She sacrifices her fourteen years of life only by waiting for her husband. As it all way famous Ram and Lakshmana rescue many of the habitats during their exile for example one of these demons, the repulsive giantess Surpanakha, offered to marry both Ram and Lakshmana. When they refused, the giantess pounce on Sita, but the brothers amputate Surpanakha's ears and nose and pack her away. Surpanakha sent her younger brother Khara and an army of demons to avenge her, but Ram and Lakshmana defeated and killed them all. And from here the great war of *Ramayana* begins to rescue Sita from the demon brother of Surpanakha, the mighty Ravana. After their reunion, Ram doubted whether Sita had continued to be faithful while held subjugated by Ravana. Sita announced her virtue and proved it by passing through a fire unharmed. The fire god Agni also spoke on her support and Ram recognized her innocence.

The couple returned to Ajodhya, and Ram began an extensive control of peace and prosperity. But the people still interrogated Sita's faithfulness. In time, Ram started to doubt her

¹⁰ Anecdote – A incident narrated precisely and humorously or in a joyful manner

innocence as well, and he banished her. While in exile, Sita found refuge with an old sage Valmiki, and she gave birth to Ram's twin sons, Kush and Lava. After many years, the two boys visited Ajodhya. When Ram saw them, he accepted them as his sons and called Sita back from exile. Sita returned and protested her innocence again. She called on Mother Earth to confirm that she was telling the truth. In response, the earth opened a crack beneath Sita and swallowed her. Grief stricken by the loss of Sita, Ram asked the gods to end his sorrow. The gods told Ram that he must either enter heaven or stay on earth. Ram chose to follow Sita to eternity, so he walked into the river Sarayu and drowned. Upon Ram's death, the god Brahma welcomed the hero into heaven.

This story is usually told to indicate that for every such Ram there is a *Ramayana*. The number of *Ramayana* and the range of their influence in South and South East Asia over the past twenty-five hundred years or more is eye catching. A list of language and dialects in which the Ram and Sita story is found are – Anamneses, Balinese, Bengali, Cambodians, Chinese, Gujrati, Javanese, Kennard, Kashmiri, Bhutanese, Laotian, Malaysian, Marathi, Oriya, Prakrit, Sanskrit, Santali, Sinhalese, Tamil, Telugu, Thai and Tibetan.¹¹ Through the centuries, these languages say more than one stories of Ram in their verse of the *Ramayana*. Sanskrit alone contains more than twenty or more telling belonging to various narrative genres of the *Ramayana*. Camille Buckle a student counted three hundred telling of the *Ramayana*. The essay of “*Three Hundred Ramayana: Five examples and Three Thoughts on Translation*” elaborates the differentiation of narration style of *Ramayana* among cultures. The article suggests that there are several versions of the *Ramayana* throughout the glob but they differ in their narrative style and portrayal of the characters. Though the characters are same as to the chore Ramayana of Valmiki but the stories related to the characters are dissimilar.

1.2. MAHABHARATA

An essential epic of India and the lengthiest poem on the planet, the *Mahabharata* is a holy Hindu content. It comprises of numerous legends and stories spinning around the contentions

¹¹ A.K. Ramanujan's essay entitled “*Three hundres Ramayanas: Five Example and Three Thoughts on Translation*” gives details of the varieties of the *Ramayanas* for different cultures and different countries (geographical areas) throughout Asian countries.

between two wings of a legendary crew. The stories which include gods, demigods, and saints contain components of cosmology, reasoning, and religious principle. An area of the epic called the *Bhagavad Gita* is the most critical religious content of *Hinduism*. *Hinduism* considers Bhagwat Gita as the blessed book of the religion. Although history speaks the ancient sage, named Veda Vyasa wrote the *Mahabharata*, it was almost definitely composed by a number of different poets and then collected into a single work sometime between 400 B . C. and 200 A.D. The epic about two hundred years later reached to its present form. It covers nearly 100,000 verses and is divided into eighteen sections called *Parvan*. The plots of *Mahabharata* are set in the kingdom Kurukshetra on the northern plains of India. The establishment of the chief characters and provided background for the central conflict of the epic has been illuminated in the opening *Parvans*. That war starts when the legitimate successor to the throne of Kurukshetra, a visually impaired sovereign named Dritarastra, is disregarded in obligingness of his younger sibling Pandu. As opposed to taking the throne, then again, Pandu goes to the Himalaya Mountains to live as a single, leaving Dritarastra on the throne to rule. Before Pandu left Kurukshetra, his two wives conceived five children and the senior sibling Dritarastra got hundred children, here the two wings of the family rose up. The son of Pandu became known as the Pandavas who lived at the kingly courtyard with their cousins, the hundred sons of Dritarastra known as the Kauravas.

When the Pandavas came of age, the elder brother, Yudhishtira, claimed the authority from his uncle, demanding that he was the equitable inheritor. A grudge broke out between the family, and the Kauravas eventually forced their cousins to the exile. Resentment broke out between the family, and the Kauravas inevitably constrained the Pandavas into expulsion in the woodland. Amid their outcast, the Pandavas participated in a challenge to win the hand of delightful princess named Draupadi. The Kauravas additionally came into the contest; however the Pandava sibling Arjuna won the hand of the princess, who turned into the common wife to each of the five Pandavas. After the competition, King Dhritarashtra got back to the Pandavas to his court and partitioned the kingdom among them and his children, Kaurava. Destined with these settlements, the Kauravas went up against the Pandavas to a round of ivories and procured back the whole kingdom with unscrupulous. At the end of the day, the Pandavas were constrained into exile. Once again, the Pandavas were forced into banish. After many years of

roving, the Pandavas returned to reclaiming the kingdom, however, the Kauravas declined to surrender control and both sides arranged for war. The god Krishna, a relative of both the Pandavas and Kauravas, upheld the Pandavas. Despite the fact that he took no part in the battling, he served as charioteer for the Pandava sibling Arjuna and issued him advice. Their conversations make up the section of the *Mahabharata* known as the Bhagavad Gita on the battle field. The conflict between the Pandavas and Kauravas makes up only a portion of the Mahabharata. The work incorporates numerous different stories about divinities and saints and spreads a gigantic scope of subjects. The stories present complex philosophical thoughts that shape the premise of the Hindu confidence and sets of principles, social obligations, and religious standards, monetary unit capacity of the time. The Mahabharata got to be tremendously famous in India and all through Southeast Asia. The work inspired many prehistoric works of art, such as Indian miniature painting and the elaborate sculptures of the ancient temples of Angkor Watt and Angkor Thorn in Cambodia.

1.3. WOMEN IDENTITY AND ASSERTIONS IN THE RETELLINGS OF MYTHOLOGY

Both the stories of epics involved around wars, sacrifices, mind games, politics, romance and family values. The wars conducted in both of the epics are for the rescue and revenge of women particularly. The role of Indian Women in Literature is quite wide in spectrum.

Here two of the great epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are also in the same link and give no possibility to women for their hopes. Indian women for long have been surrounded with the pain and suffering of conventional social order. It can be clearly viewed that in *Ramayana* for the sake of a husband's suspicion a woman has to go to exile, bound to give birth and brought up her sons all alone and even after that inspections just to proof her purity she needs another man to defend her. The tyranny of women in *Ramayana* is not only restricted to these pictures it is far beyond that, when Lakshmana's wife Urmila has to sacrifice her whole marital life just to support her husband's emotion for a long period of fourteen year, is heart broking . She has nothing to do either with the promises of Dusharatha or with the exile of Ram but she has to stay alone for years just after her wedding because her husband wants to accompany the elder brother.

Likewise in the second epic The Mahabharata, it is full of the exploitation of women's identity and independence where a girl is forced to be shared by five brothers, being exchanged on the gamble house of the royal court.

This humiliation is so vast that a woman will be never even imagined of for her adversary though but here a lady has to go through all that assault just for her slacker husbands. Some question arises: about the identity and personal will of woman. Does Draupadi, Sita and Urmila really wanted to tie up with the shackle of patriarchy? Have they been ever assertive enough to take stand for their own? What could be the consequences if a self-confident woman of this modern age would have dragged up by the male member of her family? What would be the answer of a woman from this contemporary era when she will be asked to sacrifice a long 14 year of her life just to fulfill someone's promise? To dig out the answers to these questions to conclude a proper definition to the idea of independent, modern and assertive women a trend of retelling mythology has been started which is a remarkable effort from the field of literature. Refolding the mythology can show the dynamic role of the Indian woman, to identify the changes and perspective of a woman towards society in a present time. It is so helpful to analyze how the female perception is so different from the male discourse, especially contrasting the myths from these epics. In 1980s the era of *myth busting*¹² started by the Indian feminist who stepped out from the shadow and rewrote those mythologies which were previously written by the male in a different plot. For example the first ever retold mythological document was Ranganayakamma's *Ramayana Visha vrukhsya*. This retelling and revising of mythologies are important for a society as the male treatise elide women and make them invisible. There are evidences where men written myths and piece of historical documents functioned to infantilize women. Re-visioning myth is a method of emancipation by which tradition gets reinvented and man-made laws are subverted. The recent example and the very first retelling in our Indian context was by Amit Banker's *Ramayana* series which was published in the year 2003.

This paper is about two female characters of the epic Mahabharata from two different retellings of this mythical poem. The first character is Draupadi from the book, *The Palace of Illusion* by Chitra Banarjee Divakaruni and second character Uruvi which is a fictional character

¹² Myth Busting – The idea of contrasting the concept of mythology

from the book, *Karna's Wife: the Outcast Queen* by Kavita Kane. These retelling do not revolve around the males of the mythology narrated earlier rather it focuses on the motion of these female characters and their points of view towards their surroundings. Effort has been given to objectify the bringing mythology to the present year and to reshaping and contemporizing the prewritten classic poems. This retelling not only emphasis to asserting the identity of women rather it gives effort to erases the thin line between mythology and past.

CHAPTER II

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

India, a country is being addressed as a mother to its citizens, its soil is being respected as women namely *Bharatmata*; so it is quite apparent to an outsider that what specification a woman may have in this country but unfortunate to this subcontinent there is nothing identical to the above statements and beliefs. From politics to academics, from science to literature and from our very own mythologies to the contemporary culture are all predominant by man. Which political party is governing or which institute is offering the best academics curriculum, which is the most successful missile ever launched or which is the best piece of poetry ever inked it hardly matters.

2.1 Portrayal of Woman and their Constitutional Rights

The only structure that fits all above the components on its frame is *patriarchy*¹³. From the ancient era the one who used to be in disadvantages is woman in different role as a mother, sister and daughter from the past decades. May be these all are the pre-assigned duties to a women to manage one of the big part of a society a home. Taking the advantages of our very own historical documents like *Manusmriti* written by sage Manu where he has described woman as slaves from beginning to the end of their life. (Sunitha Y. "*Fragrance of Feminism in Tara Patel's Poems 'Women' and 'Request'*") If we will focus on the different aspect of the society, women have always been placed secondary to man, as a biotic machine of reproduction which is still

¹³ Patriarchy – A male dominated frame of society, culture, arts or politics where woman is placed on the second level on hierarchy. Patriarchy restricts the free functioning of woman in the society.

continuing from the past itself. The claws of patriarchy are so gigantic and tough that the women are unable to realize their basic fundamental rights. In the name of religion, custom and tradition women are marginalized, subjugated and restricted from the other roles beside a homemaker or a mother.

If we will focus on the Indian constitutional rights of women, in 1895 municipal voting right for women came up. Following that several other rights and laws rose up but their utilization by the women fraternity due to the lack of accessibility to education, awareness, self-assertion and broader opportunity. The pre-colonial movement dug a tunnel of freedom to raise their voices as well as to develop the assertiveness. Considering that secondary wheel an unimportant one could bring damage to the vehicle.

Likewise society needs both of the male and female. Without the existence and support of one another it is unmanageable to survive and track the society. The examples are not less than clouds; on this queue another attempt was taken in the year 1914 by Raja Ram Mohan Rai who projected *Almiya Sabha* for women education. Then again in the years 1921 and 1972 the subjugated women got a support from *National Council of women and Indian Women Conference* respectively. Here evidences can be presented of the efforts made for perking up the Indian women regarding Arts, Culture, Academic Activities, Legal Rights as well as their social responsibility. Few examples can be:

- 1920- In Travancore and Cochin the voting power has been given to the women
- 1921- National level voting Rights to women
- 1947 and further years- Hindu Marriage Act.
- 1956- Hindu Succession Act
- 1961- Dowry Prohibition Act

2.2 Women and Theatre

Steps were taken by the Government and the legal authorities gave an orbit of opportunities to women. The socio-political situation in India during the postcolonial period was gloomy till

1960's to 70's. The chances for women empowerment were not fully optimized. During this time the big portion of rural India came into the firm hold of scarcity of various basic needs and darkness of poverty engulfed the society where the victims were mainly women. At this point of time industrialization has taken place in India and certain retrenchment for labour force started up. The backward section of the society especially the Dalits started being persuasive about their demands and duties by forming their collective and expressing them through Literature. The thought of bringing out the theatre to the streets materialized where sensitive issues of women can be plotted and an elite setting of audience could communicate to these issues. Mr. Tripurari Sharma initiated and staged a drama about eve-teasing where only women were the participants. Jan Natya Manch of Safdar Hasmi (*People's Theatre Front*, formed in 1973) formed a political play on street namely *Aurat*, which dole out the issue like dowry death, child marriage, domestic abuse were highlighted. Sheila Bhatia Laxmi Chandra, Chama Ahuja, Ipshita Chandra, Usha Ganguli, Rani Balbir Kaur Neelam Mansingh Chaudhury, B.Jayashree, Arundhati Raje are the names shines always on the frame of theatres for nurturing women's identity.

To cite just a few examples from Anita Singh's "Aesthetics of Indian Feminist Theatre"—
"Akka , the National Women's Theatre Festival held in Mysore, 2001, National Women's Theatre Festival organized by Yavanika, a theatre group based in Hyderabad, National Workshop on Women, Poorva, Festival of Asian Women, 'Voicing Silence", Gendered Theatre by M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation organizes yearly festival and has held four interactive women's theatre festivals, called Kulavai orcelebration, (kulavai is the Tamil name for the ululation sound made by women), Samudaya from Karnataka, Kalashetra from Manipur, Prithvi Theatre from Mumbai, Alarippu from Delhi (means blossoming, established in 1983), Rangkarmee from Kolkatta, Rangayana from Mysore and Koothu –p-pattarai from Chennai along with organizations/institutions such as the National School of Drama, the ICCR, Natarang Pratisthan often mount women centric plays and ideologically committed theatre and use theatre as a medium for social change."

2.3 Western Feminism and Indian Feminism

The awareness has been evoked long before among women about identifying their place in the society in the western land, where women are self-sufficient and alert about their rights and duties. If we will throw light to the history of women evolutions in western country the major examples can be drawn from the feminist movement and different national revolution. Unquestionably the radical feminist movement possesses an inevitable role for the liberation and salvaging the status of the women in the society. Feminism¹⁴ basically is a thought process where women as well as male counterpart of the society are determined the awareness among women and going against the prejudice set for them in the various aspect such as economy, society and politics. These preconceived notions debarred them from the equal participation as like their male counterpart in the society. (Clare Chamber. “*Feminism, Liberalism and Marriage*”)

Especially during the French revolution the French women claimed for their liberation. They came out behind the curtains and started raising their voices against the patriarchy. All of them were having a different motive different goals but their perspective were parallel to each other. They all wanted to be approved as a mainstream gender rather as a second gender. The French Revolution raised up the voice of subjugated women of different economic and cultural scale of the society. The different waves of feminism emerged during this stage of renaissance which shows the intensity of for the attainment liberty as a distinctive gender not as a second gender of the French society.

If we will discuss about the *feminism* both from the western and Indian perspective then Indian feminist theories are unsettled topics where the western countries have concrete base about their approaches towards this theory. Unlike the western feminist there is no definite and cut edge definition for “*what Indian feminism actually stands for?*” The equation of gender roles in an Indian society is completely biased towards the males. The open house discussion even for the female right laws equality is not there. In the academic field there was no sphere that was designed for women until 1990s. Before that any idea proposed by the social reformer were just near to the inconsistency and haziness and were almost an illusion too.

¹⁴ Feminism- A doctrine that advocates the equality of sexes in the society, it also refers to betterment of woman in any society.

Indian mindset for feminism is nothing but an exclusive debate to discuss by limited upper-class people society. Most of the Indian residing in an urban city and can either converse or have knowledge about foreign cultures and language they are at least known to the term Feminism but unfortunately they have an very ambiguous and disgusted picture for this concept. They are skeptic of its usefulness and application to their real life. And the Indian women are significantly bound by their custom and tradition. They are supposed to compel inside the ring of the male dictatorship. The society which is highly categorized and based on the hierarchical concept for gender role it is quite challenging to bring equality. If we note the tune of contemporary women they are still jumbled to pick the priorities of their own lives. (Ghos Arpita. *Indian Feminism. indian Feminism. "A Debate on the incorporation of the 'alien' culture within the 'native' tradition"*).

For example children or husband, whether career or homemaking, to voice up or not. In spite of constitutional provisions and legal norms, those are aiming to reshaping and strengthening women fraternity from some lacunas which causes dowry death, refusal to the widow marriage and polygamy etc. ("M.Talpade Chandra. *Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses*.1986")

To encourage the women writing a remarkable step has been taken by two Indian female Writer and Journalist. Susie Tharu and K. Lalitha are two Indian writers who played the important role in discovering and collecting the writings by Indian Women. They accumulated women writings from thirteen languages which were being folded in 2 volumes, entitled as *Women Writing in India: 600 B.C. to the Present. Volume I* of the series (*600 B.C. to the Early Twentieth Century*), is an astonishing collection of 140 selections of poetry and prose by sixty-eight individual authors and was published in the English for the first time. They focused on the lives of Indian women, about their understanding to feminist literature and to bring out an India of present scenario. Their special attentions were on the writings of women who have been criticized and were indifferently talked about. In India people has the preconceived notion for feminism as a western rooted concept. Though it is completely correct, but the idea of feminist theories and arguments on women's role has been originated in Asian land from the 6th century

BC itself. There we can find evidence for Buddha who has discussed and debated on the topic whether a woman is eligible to participate in the order and become a nun. Writing on women education is also there from 18th century, which has been written by a Chinese scholar Chen Hung Mau.

Feminism focuses on the role of women in plays, theatres, drama and several other works in the field of literature. It is clearly visible that the role of a female character is always inessential. Before 19th century there is hardly any evidence of a women dramatist. Their expressiveness has been suppressed and their vocal presence in a theatrical play was absent. There are certain examples of women writings in ancient era like.

A huge collection of articles and write ups, books and manuscripts are there providing the real life citation about the differences which shows how the women lose their expressiveness and commands over their own words. For example; Linda Nochlin's essay "*why has there been no great artist?*" (1971), in this essay she argued about the genders and cultures. Feminism couldn't become a widely captured phenomenon and the reason behind this is the traditionalist structure and Indian outlook of visualizing things.

2.4 Status of Women in Indian Society

In India girls are not safe in the outer world or inside their mother's wombs. Vrinda Nabar in her seminal dissertation, *Cast/e as Woman* (1995), very meticulously observed and focused on the traditional role in our social survival and how the cooperative insensibility of the Indians has been affected. "Gender" is a social construct it was known to all but discrimination in India begins at birth, or even before that. It starts before the child born. In various cultures throughout the globe the fact rests of longing for a male child and gender infanticide has been a common practice; the chief preys of infanticide everywhere is no one other than the daughters.

Regarding this Adrienne Rich refers to Lloyd de Meuse who has argued in a familiar essay that killing female children was "routine practice" in unenlightened Europe. A husband of the 1st century B.C. inculcates his wife: "If, as well may happen, you give birth to a child, if it is a boy let it live; if it is a girl, expose it". (Rich: 185-186)

Indians are fond of talking and celebrating their magnificent history. For many Indians the past has a living attendance which serves contemporary needs, and has never stopped to structure the Indian realization through the ages. The regular Indian merely admits the rationality of the past without questioning too enormously. Without knowing its socio-cultural basis or the attractiveness they view it as a universal absolute. Thus Indians recollection about the remote past when women were equal with men and no discernment was visible.

We are evidently nourished with images of Sitas, Savitris and Draupadis from the idyllic ages of our national epics, unquestionably written by men. These Sitas and Draupadis announces an unending custom of tolerant women whose real bravery is covered with the message of piety and service to their husbands, adoration of these potentials so that death is seen in some cases, as preferable. Their assets of showing sharp wit, intelligence, resourcefulness and affection have never been captive asleep for mimicry. Tradition has only emphasized women's self-immolation. This perverted concept of "pativrata" – the flawless one, is idealized through legends, myths, folklores, folksongs and reaffirmed through ceremonies of different kinds. Even educated, elite, urban women follow the practice devotedly. Here the notion of purity and virginity comes where we can visualize immature comments and views of Indians who are passive about the concept of feminism.

For a piece of evidence, in the near past India had a very experience of losing a daughter namely Jyoti Singh famously known as *Nirbhaya* after a gap of three years a movie has been broadcasted by BBC where two of the defensive advocates (ML Sharma and AP Singh) from the culprits sides were vehemently showed their hypocrisy for women's status in the Indian society. They preferred the great Indian culture to support their deserted mentality.

2.5 Questioning Womanhood

Not only in India but in every part of the globe the question for defining womanhood is under a hesitation. What womanhood speaks up, does it only bear an identical body structure? Does it only constitute by certain traits, behaviour and duties? The ultimate answer to these questions is

a big no. Womanhood is about the personal realization of self as a female who considers herself as essential as a male. The realization is not only necessary for woman in a personal level but for the society as well. The subjugation of women is not a strategy; it's an established theory of a civilization following patriarchy. Deriving women to a channel of modernism to vindicate the women's liberty is somehow declining the valuable traits of womanhood. Yes, it is important to bring equality on the ground of race, religion and gender but there should not be a spoiler alert or identity crisis for any individual. To recognize this blog has been written by Kinsey Whearty on Thursday, October 11 2012, where she exposed her personal identity crisis for playing a role of women as a home maker or a women as professional teacher. She experienced this crunch after spending a couple of months. Kinsey realized she is dropping her potentials and her capabilities as a teaching professional as her partner Josh was experiencing. Simultaneously she wants her home clean, have kids watch them growing up, get pampered by her partner. She needs a dual life of balance where she can play vibrantly both the roles of a home maker and a working lady. Modernity of a woman is not subjected to her behavioural patterns to life styles and her attire; it is all about the independent thought of her that she should follow and the self-governing attitude of these women should be respected by the society which we can call a modern society. On defining a real woman it is all about how she behaves according to her judgments. For certain evidences in the past we have seen movies like Queen (2014), Water (2005), Matrubhumi (2003) in Indian context. (Whearty Kinsley. "*The Modern Woman: How do you define being a Woman?*")

Some portion of Indian society who understand the real realm of feminism and the prominence of women to humanity are giving their best by reshaping the presumptions built and rest are still in the mode of inertia. The alertness to the internal soul of human should be given from an earlier stage which can only possible through an assertive parents, family and society. "*You must be the change you wish to see in the world*"- M K Gandhi. To change the approach towards the gender equality and veneration to the identity of genders people should work from a grass root level so that a growing tree of dynamic human behaviour can produce fruits from the seeds of these efforts.

CHAPTER III

3. METHODOLOGY

The study is based on quantitative analysis where the textual analysis method is adopted to analyse the texts on retellings of Indian mythologies—the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*—to find the woman identity then and there done to draw certain interpretations on the woman identity and self assertion. The paper is on the base of contemporary Indian Literature, where mythology is on the focus. To interpret the identity and individualism of a woman in the society, the retellings are the major weapons and this has been done by the close reading of the novels and positioning them in the contemporary society. The interpretations of the novels are done by using feminist theory of certain ages.

CHAPTER IV

4. ANALYSIS

4.1 Analysing the Character Draupadi from the book *The Palace of Illusion*

Mahabharata is a story of friendship, freedom, betrayal, war, rage and revenge. This epic revolves around the heroes and their acts of heroism. Breaking free from the trends, retellings are the genre where a character like Draupadi has been presented as a heroic sovereign in the epic of *Mahabharata*. Draupadi appears from the flames with a divine announcement from the heavens that she would be the cause of destruction of evil warriors. Draupadi is always exposed to vehemence: her Swayamvara ends in strife; a fivefold marriage is imposed upon her; she is outraged in the royal court twice over; the character of Draupadi in the book “*The Palace of Illusion*” has been narrated as one who was firm and a woman with a rigid determination.

Draupadi is the proud and the passionate heroine of the epic *Mahabharata*, Draupadi has persisted as a woman of substance. Her name says a lot about the characteristics she bears. “Draupadi” the name was derived from the name of her father king Draupada. She is otherwise known as Panchali, the princess of Panchal Kingdom, as she was the granddaughter of Prushata, who had named her as Parasali. Her name Yagnyaseni explains her divine birth from the fire and the name Ayonija denotes that she was not born from a woman’s womb. Her close association

with Krishna is reflected in her other name, Krinshnaa. (Thakur Pallavi. *Speaking Trees*. 16 *Unkown Facts about Draupadi*)

In the modern *Mahabharata* the unforgettable heroine is in no way less than Bheema or Arjuna in strength and spirit, velour and virtues but still she has been victimized by the fate and downtrodden by her own family members. Vyas's Draupadi was tolerant and she has been accused of being the reason for the entire war of Kurukhsetra. It can be observed clearly from the retellings that Draupadi was not the only reason behind it, though her humiliation in the court leads the Kauravas towards the destruction but the entire war has different dimensions. For evidence, Lord Krishna personally supervised the performance of the Rajsuya Sacrifice. The Kauravas has no intensions to participate in the celebration of Pandavas; quiet after the unlikeness they attended the function. Unfortunately, Duryodhana was put into embarrassment there. In the new palace he assumed a pool as polished floor and fell into the water. Draupadi started laughing on that point. Later on Duryodhana saw the floor was shining with high polish and thought it was a pond; so he picks up his cloths in a suspension that it may not get damp. Irony to his fate again there were waves of hilarity. At that moment, Draupadi laughed at him, saying "*son of a blind would be blind himself*" (Chitra B. Divakaruni.173). Some versions of *Mahabharata* do not support this, though it does refer to the emphatic teasing. These abusive moments stabbed Duryodhana deep within him. Nevertheless, because of this offense and the jealousy for Pandavas within him for their luxury, Duryodhana decided to welcome them and hence planned them to play a game of dice.

Being a wife of five husbands those who are brothers are not a justified and a laidback job as well. Her husbands though married to her and gave her the dignified designation of their head queen but they got married to their other wives also. Draupadi was living not only in a polyandrous relationship, but also dealing with a polygamous one as well because the Pandavas had married to multiple princess, sisters and daughters from kingdoms. Bhīma was already married to the demoness Hidimba. Arjun married multiple princesses after getting marriage to Draupadi, including Subhadra, Lord Krishna's sister. Unlike the other princesses who stayed in their fathers' kingdoms, Subhadra moved to Indraprastha to live with Arjuna. After the deaths of Sisupala and Jarasandha, Nakul and Sahadev married their daughters as a symbolic to their

friendship. Draupadi managed this elusive relationship symphonically. But she had not forgotten the reason of her birth and was biding her time. The older texts shows its validation for this marriages which has been highlighted in the retelling with an adverse implication. Draupadi's displeasure and reluctance is extremely reflective in the retelling of Mahabharata, *The Palace of Illusion*, when she is asked to get married to all five of the brother her word were defensive, she was not comfortable with the second wives for her husbands proving this in the novel the lines by Draupadi is :*I finally began to see what the wily Kunti had in her mind when she insisted that I was to be married to all of them, and though they never made my heart beat widely, the way I'd hoped as a girl , I committed myself totally to the welfare of the Pandavas*"(Chitra B. Divakaruni 152). It is quite faultless here that the marriage to the Pandavas was never a cheering event for her.

Here we can also highlight the preconceived notion of the *virgin beauty* , which is viral among the Indian society, Draupadi has been blessed (!) with the gift of regaining her virginity for each of the year when she go to her next husband. If she is a queen and her purity is in question for not being a virgin then it is obvious for the general mass to procure the idea of virgin beauty for their society. In the Novel on the protagonist word "*Each time I went to a new brother, I'd be a virgin again.*" Contradicting these values of the ancient conformist society the author Banerjee speaks through the protagonist that, "*If the sage had cared to inquire, I'd have requested the gift of forgetting, so that when I went to each brother I'd have requisitioned that Arjuna be my first husband. He was the only one of the Pandavas I felt I could have fallen in love with.*" *If he had loved me back, I might have been able to push aside my regrets about Karna and find some semblance of happiness*" (Chitra B. Divakaruni 120). The above quoted line are clearly indicating Draupadi's reluctance towards the other Pandavas and at the same time her hopefulness to be valued and appraised by Arjuna as well. One important thought of the character Draupadi is reflecting behind the curtains that once she was passionate for Karna which is for lifelong she has not been able to express due to the dominance of the King Draupada's political frame work to take revenge from sage Drona.

Though Draupadi has been presented as a fusion of the modern and traditional woman her conscience still works faster in the retold version of the epic. Citing this context in the

chapter of Boon, Draupadi shows her disagreement towards Yudhistira's over humbleness towards the then of Hastinapur Dhritarastra. She was surprised to see how her husband the most truthful and intelligent Pandavas could show gratitude to the person who has planned to kill them once. *"Whenever the blind king made a great show, of embracing my husbands and calling loudly on the gods to shower them with good fortune." He blessed me also with such platitudes as may you be the mother of a hundred sons, or May your wedding sindura forever shine on your forehead. (We knew, of course, that he'd like nothing better than to have the entire Pandavas ancestry perishing)"* (Chitra B. Divakaruni.129) . Draupadi raised a sharp argument on King Dhritarastra's moral conscience. *"Was he a saint, or merely lacking in common sense?"* (Chitra B. Divakaruni.129)

Here in the modern version the Draupadi of Chitralekha Banarjee has questioned the rightfulness on Gandhari to be blind folded. She shows strong argument that, when a man is impairment with physical traits his wife being his better half should show him the accurate path in life. She claims the blind folded idea of detriment irrelevant and imprudent. To quote: *"At first I dismissed her as docile and overly traditional"*. (Chitra B. Divakaruni 120)

Behind the borders to be welcome Draupadi still knows how to complement her identity as a princess and as a queen as a mistress of the earth's greatest dynasty, She has never complained about the luxury that she lost rather she has praised her husbands for their capabilities as a strength she was always there in the thick and thins of the Pandavas. Praising her husbands he utters *"I saw my husband too differently. They were a unit together, five finger that complemented each other to make up a powerful hand – a hand that would protect me if the need arose. A hand that had gifted me this beautiful palace. Wasn't that sufficient to be thankful for?"*(Chitra B. Divakaruni 148).

The self-respect for a woman is important to be identified as an independent individual in the society .Draupadi has never claimed herself as a weak, ignored, and disgraceful woman of her time. The ancient epic shows her calm and moderate nature but has never focused on the strong suit as she gives her patience, tolerance and losses a great clap. She is not only claiming her privileges but she is conscious enough about her responsibilities as a wife. *"I'd played a*

crucial role in bringing them to their destiny. I'd share their hardship in Khandav. I'd helped them design this unique palace, which so many longed to see. If they were pear, I was the gold wire on which they were strung" (Chitra B. Divakaruni.151).

She raises a sharp opinion on patriarchy, she remarked about the tutor's idea on reincarnation. According to Draupadi of this modernize epic there should be a world free of male demands and orders. Cited, *"Dhri's tutor was of the opinion that virtuous women were sent directly into their next birth, where, if they were lucky, they reincarnated as men. But I thought that if lokas exists at all, good women would surely o too one where men were not allowed so that they could be finally free of male demand"* (Chitra B. Divakaruni 155).

In Vedavyasa's Mahabharata, Draupadi has been portrait as a persecuted queen, her rages for the dishonors has not been tinted. The retelling *"Palace of Illusion"* Divakaruni Banarjee has thrown light on the retaliation that emerged for Kaurava , in *Palace of Illusion* Draupadi is not a wife who is begging for her privileges , here she ensures a strong promise to herself for originate a fire of revenge inside her husbands. She endures the dishonor, she questioned but she has not acted in a rebellious way in Vyas's Mahabharata but Divakaruni's Draupadi does. The game of dice made Yudhistira became the slave of the Kaurava king and he even lost Draupadi also in this gamble. The Kauravas having won, Duryodhana ordered that Draupadi be dragged into the court. The Pandavas bent their heads in shame. Yudhishtira now knew what an unjust action he was guilty of. But it was now too late and regret was of no use. When Draupadi heard this news she was dazed. But instead of meekly obeying her husband Yudhishtira , she sent back a query which none could answer. She questioned her husband Yudhishtira, if he had pledged her before or after he had lost himself in the gamble. She argued that if he had pledged himself first, he had no right over her as he was already a slave. She later challenged the game as illegal as she argued that Duryodhan, a Kaurava, had not placed his brothers and wife as a matching stake. Mahabharata tells us how the assembly started to hiss loudly when Yudhishtira staked Draupadi. Plausibly the ownership of the wife by the husband was recognized but not respected in society. The Ramayana preaches that there is no greater gift for a man than his wife. But the phrase gift to a man gives the impression that the wife is merely an object to provide happiness for the man. Draupadi can't diagnose her situation there in the court; her inner voice piercingly

asked her about the identity she bears. *“I’m a queen. Daughter of king Draupad, Sister of Dhritadyumna, Mistress of the greatest palace on earth. I can’t be gambled away like a bag of coins or summoned to court like a dancing girl”* (Chitra B. Divakaruni 190)

Here she can felt the alarming voice of *Dhai maa*, a woman who is fully engulfed by the idea of male dominance and women subjugation. Once during her stay in the maternal home she has been taught to be the shadows of her husbands not to stand forward them. Again quoted from the chapter *“The wife is the property of the husband, no less than a cow or a slave”* (Chitra B. Divakaruni.190)

She also raised question on the credibility of the Nyaya Shastra, in the court she was not ashamed to prove her integrity, with a pathetic appeal she asked all the elderly scholar of Hastinapur to turn the pages of Nyaya Shastra where she reminds them *“If perchance a man lost himself, He no longer had any jurisdiction over his wife”*. (Chitra B. Divakaruni.194) She derived the underlining meaning in the different dimension that if a man is losing the authority over his wife then from then the lady is an independent individual no one can chase her for their entertainment or benefits.

At last, the fact that Draupadi stands fairly apart from her five husbands is brought tellingly home when not even Sahadeva of whom she took care with maternal solicitude, nor her favourite Arjuna - remains by her side when she falls and lies dying yet unprotected, on the Himalayan slopes during their journey to heaven in Parva of the Mahaprasthanika. It is said, however, in some analysis of the Mahabharata that only Bheema, at such a stage tried to save her from her fall from the cliffs by extending an unsuccessful hand to catch her. He failed and Draupadi fell to the ground below and was dying a painful death when Bheema came to her side, consoled her and remained by her side till she eventually died. During these last moments, it is said, Draupadi realized the futility of her undying love for Arjuna and felt the selfless and unconditional love and support that Bheema had provided her at each moment in her life and repented the fact that she could never reciprocate the love of Bheema in equal terms.

4.2 Analysing the Character ‘Uruvi’ from the Book *Karna’s Wife: the Outcast Queen*

Uruvi is a fictitious character created by Author Kavita Kane. The character of Uruvi here in the Novel of *Karna's Wife the Outcast Queen* is representing the second wife of Angaraj Karna Supriya. In Vyasadev's *Mahabharata* there is no discussion of Karna's other wives, his first wife Vrushali is only elaborated negligibly. The story unfolds against the background of *Mahabharata*. Uruvi, the only daughter of the King of Pukeya challenges all societal norms and traditions to garland the person she's in love with Karna, a social castaway and a charioteer's son. Being wife of Karna is not easy and Uruvi faces bitterness from all the people who've ever loved her. That Karna has pledged his loyalties to the Kauravas prince Duryodhana doesn't help the situation. Raised in absolute royalty and pampered throughout her life by a doting father, the Khyastria princess, Uruvi finds herself facing many challenging situations, some that even shatter her faith in the man she loves the most. But having gone against family and society, she now has to live her choices for the sake of her unborn child. As horrific events leading up to the famous war of Kurukshetra begin to unravel, Uruvi supports herself for what is going to be her final destiny. Quitting to the fact that breaking her husband's resolve is not an option, she busies herself in her homely duties, tending to wounded soldiers and being Karna's strength for the few years she knows they will be together. In the entire Mahabharata war Uruvi is the witness to the twists and turns of Karna's fate, and how it is indivisibly linked to the divine design.

Unlike the other novel discussed before this book has not created for the wars and conflicts between Kauravas and Pandavas. The story here revolves around Karna the greatest combatant of history and his love angles with his wife Uruvi a woman who has built her own norms and boundaries for her life. Uruvi's character has been narrated as a question to the system of predefined traditions in India. She has potential to go against the system for the sake of giving affiliation to her emotions, she chose Karna a Sutaputra over the Khestriya prince Arjuna in her Swayamvara. The story begins with the swayamvara of Uruvi with the narration of archery contest between Arjuna and Karna. Uruvi was formerly knew Arjun but after meeting Karna she was completely mesmerized by his elegance and persona. Karna won Uruvi's hand by winning the archery contest. As every common lad Uruvi was also enthusiastic and Passionate to get married to the love of her life, longing to have Karna as her husband results into the sleepless

nights of her. She got married to Karna by breaking all the social prejudice but the fate was not that auspicious. The complications started right over there in a different dimension. Being a second wife to someone and that to from another clan is a large question of survival for Uruvi in Karna's House. Vrushali, the first of Karna was very much adored by Karna's family as an ideal daughter in law. She was caring, obedient and a complete homemaker for Karna's parents and brother Satruntapa. Being known to these facts Uruvi has the enthusiasm to play the broad role of a wife, she was all set to accept the oddities and uniqueness of the new life. Uruvi seems to be rare bird to the family especially to her brother in law Satruntapa who was very much possessive and protective for his brother and his sister in law Vrushali. He couldn't admit the addition of Uruvi to their family, he considered her as the royal blooded outsider for their social premises. During her starting days she felt a sense of unrest as she can feel the unconditional attachment between Karna and Vrushali. They have married from so long and Vrushali worshiped Karna since years, the bond of her husband and his first wife made Uruvi uncomfortable. Even after getting married to Karna she was not sure about Karna's feelings towards her presence in his life. Uruvi was the gold who shined after being burnt for so long. She evolves a bond with Karna gradually; they started spending their quality time and conversations about their future which dragged Uruvi towards a world of cheerfulness and smoothness of life.

Progressively Karna's perception about Uruvi transformed from a pampered princess to a modest lady who holds wisdom and intelligence. Still Karna's dilemma for his past life and uncertainty about the future life was revolving around their relationship. He suspected his own considerations that Uruvi is love or longing, need or desire. It is well known to everyone that the one who dedicate his entire life and all gifted privileges for friendship against all hurdle is no other then Karna. His undaunted loyalty for Duryodhan leads him towards the path of demotion. Being known to the fact that the consequences of the epic *Mahabharata* war , Uruvi persuades Karna unsuccessfully When Panchali was trapped and being humiliated by the Kauravas Uruvi acts as an alarm to the conscience of Karna and leaves him. For which she faces criticism from Satruntapa even to a larger extend Uruvi dissuades Karna to be a part of the war all the mentioned situation are out of her hand at last. Uruvi has to face criticism for choosing Karna over Arjuna, Leave her husband for his silent approval on the tarnishing of Draupadi but she never shows of a pinch of arrogance or disrespect to Karna .The eternal love of her has never

faded for Karna. She is the silent witness to the twist and turns of Karna's fall. She is the lady who stands there by Karna during his thick and thins. Kane's debutant novel reveals the personal life of Karna, the unsung hero of *Mahabharata* and his noble blooded second wife Uruvi.

Uruvi is presenting the strong sense of feminism and softness of the female character. Simultaneously she is showing a strong repulsion towards her husband for his disgrace towards a woman and at the same time she can adopt a Suta family only to treasure her love for ever. Uruvi as woman is witty enough but at the same point she is blunt too. So in a larger context the character can be a representative of the 21st century woman who holds the intensity along with the candidness with their personality.

4.3 Comparing both of the characters

So analyzing both the characters, Uruvi might be a fictitious character but she is like a *sutradhar* who has a panoramic view on the events and opinions and reaction to each character like Kunti, Krishna, Bhishma etc. She is the contemporary voice placed in those times. She does support Draupadi but neither Draupadi nor the Pandavas want her sympathy. Draupadi's humiliation was too huge and only a woman could understand that. And Uruvi does. Uruvi leaves Karna because she finds him guilty of a crime. She is disappointed by him, she feels betrayed. Her trust and her respect for him are shattered. In modern times she could have left him without a glimpse of concern but here she tried her best to bring Karna to the precise path. There is a parallel can be drawn between Draupadi and Uruvi. They are contrasts to each other. Uruvi is privileged and pampered. Draupadi is one of the most unloved characters in the epic - her father, brother; husbands don't appreciate her much for herself. And then the triangle is deliberate, just as Draupadi rejected Karna for Arjun, Uruvi rejects Arjun for Karna. There is a strong mutual respect, this goes beyond liking. They realize how and where exactly they stand in Karna's life.

There is an unspoken acknowledgement between them. The fact that Uruvi nursed that secret and never let even Karna know that Draupadi loved him. The points of similarity between these two books are that both are through a woman's point of view. But how Draupadi reacts is so different from Uruvi. In the "*The Palace of Illusion*" Draupadi was the victim. And in "*The*

Karna's wife; the Outcast Queen Uruvi is not the victim, Karna is but she as his wife too bears the humiliation but rebels against it. Uruvi protects Karna, defends him but reacts strongly against him when she sees injustice done by him; she is his conscience keeper as well. But in the *Palace of Illusion* Draupadi supports her husband, nourished their demand and got dishonesty by their cousins but she has not protested with a sharp voice or action as Uruvi did. Draupadi helpless fury is her only reaction which could only be assuaged through revenge but Uruvi was the silent witness of the epic.

5. CONCLUSION

Mythology, antique sculptures, folk tales are the reflection of historical culture and traditional base of a society. Concluding the topic of retellings, these are the very common practices in Indian literature to rewrite the myths in different verses. Starting from writer Raja Rao to the modern day story teller Amish Tripathy, Asok Banker, Ashwin Singha, Divakaruni Banerjee, Devdutt Patnaik, and Kavita Kane all are trying to bringing the golden age of mythologies. They try to spin out the implicit point of view of different character from the original narrative. Modernizing the Indian myth serves to make the mythology more relatable to the contemporary group of onlookers. The retellings are the fusion of mythological facts and fantasy to attract the contemporary mass towards their own culture; it also helps to blur the thin line between history and mythology and joints the ancient legacy and the present x-box generation.

Here in this paper the character which is in focus are the female characters. Women are the most influential part of the background but subjugated for long. I would say, Woman's voice was heard all through the ages however just in the tunes sung to highlight the otherworldly longing in the verses and the energetic affection melodies. Indian ladies for long have been enclosed in the agony and enduring of standard society. Answer for this issue starts with the social reformers Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Veeresalingam Panthulu who battled for training for ladies, and remarriage of dowagers and for declaration of their rights. In any case, the pace of reorganization is still moderate. The voice of lady in the public arena is yet to be listened; however ladies in India have been sufficiently blessed to involve high and fair places of force. At the same time, the reality remains that conventional

ladies are yet to free themselves from the preposterous convictions of Indian culture. It can't be denied that there are clear contrasts in the middle of male and female dispositions and this distinction would show in everything to which both genders turn their hand. By knowing all these women have to raise their voices against this patriarchal tradition, where we would find literature analyzed on the basis of its own merits and not on the basis of gender.

To prove the point of freedom of womanhood and individuality the retellings are the distinctive and effective steps. Here in two of the discussed books, Divakaruni Banerjee's novel *The Palace of Illusions* retells the *Mahabharata* through the eyes of Draupadi. Its significance for Hindu Studies lies mostly in what it lets us know of the epic and its relevance to the modern women's life and to the society as well. This book is exceedingly effective as a rich study of the intricacy of sex and sexuality, fairness of judgment and demand of a woman for her soft desires in the *Mahabharata*. The book's great prologue to the verifiable milieu and optional grant on the epic will be exceedingly available for the progress. The adjusted system will be an appreciated expansion to experts of the *Mahabharata*, as well as to those keen on Gender Studies and the contemporary issues of Hindu ladies.

In *Karna's Wife: the Outcast Queen* the story takes Uruvi and Karna into account which unfolds against the background of the battle between the Pandavas and the Kauravas. As occasions develop prompting the considerable war of the *Mahabharata*, Uruvi is a witness to the turns of Karna's destiny; and how it is inseparably connected to outline. The protagonist Uruvi is showing the solid feeling of women's liberation and non-abrasiveness of the female character. All the while she has a humble aversion towards her spouse for his disrespect towards a lady and at the same note she can embrace a Suta family just to fortune her adoration forever. Uruvi as a lady is sufficiently witty and blunt as well. So in a bigger setting the character can be an agent of the 21st-century lady who holds the power alongside the authenticity with their identity. Here Karna has been portrayed as a romantic-hero in the book of Kavita Kane's *Karna's Wife*, redundantly sub-titled "*The Outcast's Queen*". Despite its weak point of flat dialogue, this is unquestionably a more serious-intentioned novel founded on a closer psychological understanding of the epic. The protagonist here is a freshly created character Uruvi who turns into Karna's second wife in the wake of performing an activity that is precisely the inverse of

Draupadi's: she rejects Arjuna, whom everybody anticipated that she would wed, for the exceptional social untouchable.

In the modern time it is necessary to be assertive for a woman but in the name of assertiveness she should not be uprooted from her base. The synthesis of traditional mythology and modernity of the present world here presented through the retellings, which is a conventional message for those who are rooted to the orthodox traditionalism and also for those who are uprooted from the moral ethics of their own culture.

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